

The story used to be told: six blind men each touch an elephant to learn what the animal is like. Feeling its tusk, trunk, ear, back, leg and tail, each reports back the qualities of what seems to be six entirely different animals. It's a parable centuries old that began in the Indian subcontinent, an effective tool for teaching about the gaps in subjective experience, or how we might use and share interpretive tools. It also has the humanistic touch, promoting communication as a salve for the perils of varied and relative experiences.

Our current states, with a resurgence in recent years of both far-right political beliefs and widespread public protest, all set to the bunker mentality backdrop of a recession, seem to necessitate an updating of this parable. Our contemporary elephant might be instead any of the animated, mutable news headlines that run across our screens and newspapers (whether, taking recent examples, 'House Prices Rise 10% In a Year', 'Students Occupy School Over Cuts Plan', or 'Election Leaders Debate Public Sector Pay Rise'). Our version then might tell of the six blind men all hearing one and the same headline, and each still coming to vastly contrasting conclusions. The elephant dissolves into a single entity that still can't be agreed upon, and our contemporary parable leaves us with (at least) six fragmented, oppositional view points that might never meet.

Can Altay is an artist whose work concerns itself with civic spaces, both physical and imagined. His works takes the form of platforms, situations, and settings that ask when the conditions for a community to exist might arise. For his second solo show at Arcade, Altay looks to the ambiguous moments that might precede such conditions, creating a space that is on the threshold of affirmative potential and menace. A bare light bulb spins in an empty room, the windows papered over with old political cartoons; innumerable reports, rumours, and stories of protest, as well as containment and control, murmur in the background. What happened or will happen here, and the cadence of the voices that arise in such a room might depend more on what interpretive tools we each might bring to such a space.

For Altay, the contemporary parable isn't a demonstration of irresolvable differences, but instead a depiction of a common space where radically different impulses from across the spectrum begin. This tenuous and fragile space is where threat and joy sit not just next to each other, but resolutely intermingled, sharing the same ambiguous birth.

- Chris Fite-Wassilak

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*Light*, 2015 is fabricated by Hayalbilim

*Window*, 2015 includes pages from the satirical comics magazines *Penguen*, *Uykusuz*, *Leman*, and *Girgir*.

Can Altay lives and works in Istanbul. His work traverses sculpture, photography and installation, and is staged and manifested through the spaces, exhibitions and publications he produces, investigating the functions, meaning, organisation and reconfigurations of public space. His 'settings' provide critical reflection on urban phenomena and artistic activity. Solo exhibitions include those at CASCO, Utrecht (2011), The Showroom, London (2010), Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2008), Sala Rekalde, Bilbao (2006) and Spike Island, Bristol (2007). His work has been represented in the Biennials of Istanbul, Havana, Busan, Gwangju, Marrakech, Taipei; and in museums and galleries such as the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; VanAbbe Museum, Eindhoven, ZKM (Karlsruhe), Artists Space, New York and SALT, Istanbul. His public projects include: Inner Space Station, protocinema, New York (2013); Distributed, Frieze Foundation, London (2012); The Church Street Partners' Gazette, The Showroom, London (2010-13) and PARK: bir ihtimal Istanbul (2010). Altay is the editor of *Ahali: an anthology for setting a setting*, 2013 published by Bedford Press, AA Publications, London. Altay's ongoing projects include a long-term collaboration with two Bolzano institutions (ar/ge kunst and Lungomare); and a public commission as part of Market Town with Radar, Loughborough.

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